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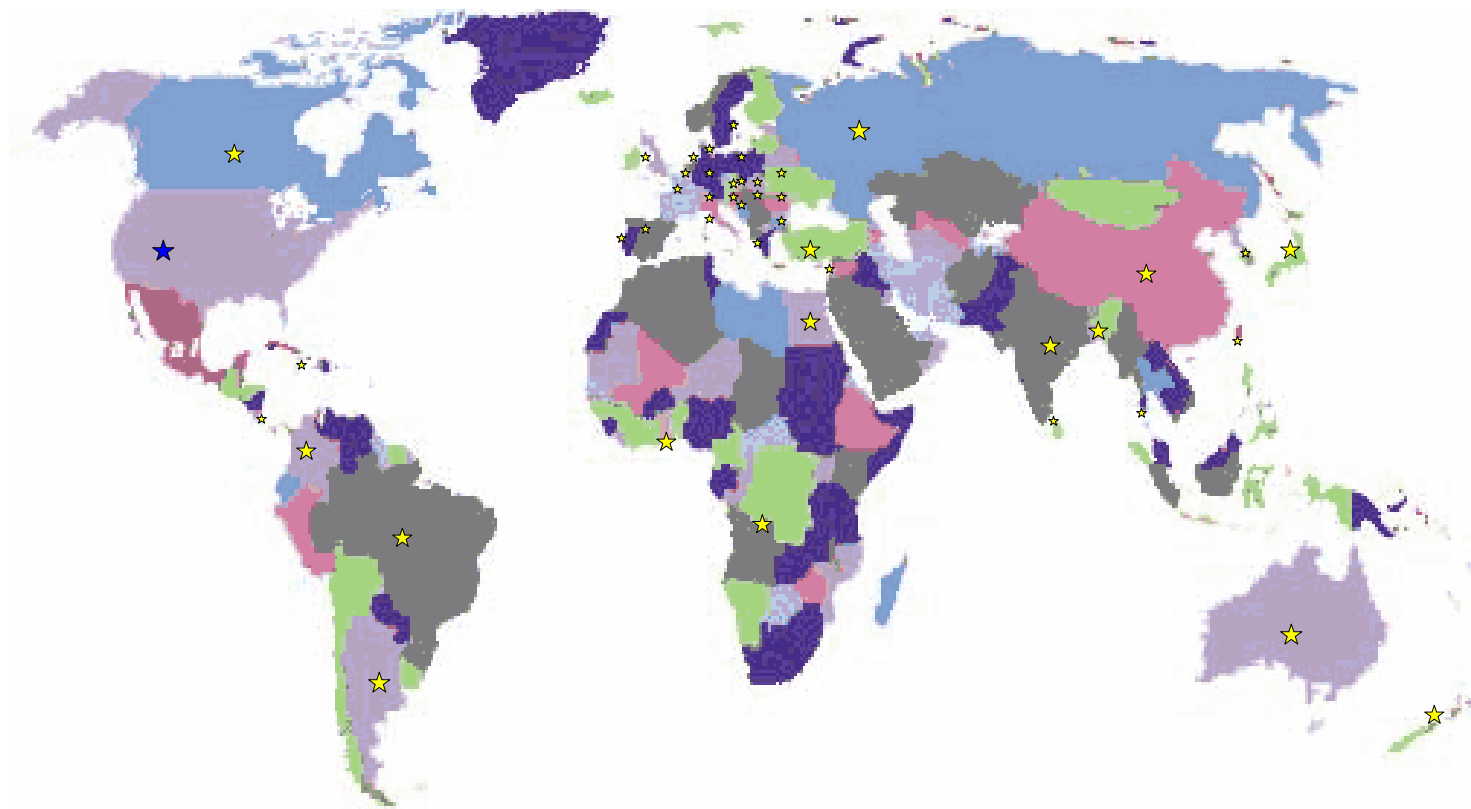
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**Los Alamos**  
NATIONAL LABORATORY

# Foreign Nationals Resource Guide

A Supplement to the Postdoctoral Program Resource Guide



# Contents

**NOTE:** *Some of the information found in this document may not apply to foreign nationals who have or are currently living in the United States (U.S.) prior to coming to the Laboratory.*

<b>Arrangements to Make Before Leaving Home:</b>	<b>1</b>
Passport(s)	1
Visas	1
Travel Arrangements	1
Credit Cards	1
Language Classes	1
American Culture	2
<b>What to Bring:</b>	<b>2</b>
Important Documents	2
Medicines and Prescriptions	2
Clothing	2
Household Items	2
U.S. Customs Regulations	2
<b>LANL:</b>	<b>3</b>
Clearances	3
Sensitive vs. Non-Sensitive	3
Useful LANL Phone Numbers	3
Immigration Services Address	3
<b>Formalities:</b>	<b>3</b>
Embassy Registration	3
Social Security Number (SSN)	4
Driver's License	4
Transportation	4
How to Buy a Car	5
Taxes	5
Post Office and Mail Service	5
<b>Family Issues:</b>	<b>6</b>
Spouse	6
Child Safety	6
<b>Schooling:</b>	<b>7</b>
The American School System	7
New Mexico State Law	7
Education in Los Alamos	7
Special Education	8
<b>Culture Shock</b>	<b>8</b>
Reverse Culture Shock	8
<b>Factors Important to Successful Intercultural Adjustments</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Your Legal Rights in the U.S.:</b>	<b>9</b>

## Arrangements to Make Before Leaving Home:

### PASSPORT(S)

Everyone planning international travel needs a passport from his/her country of citizenship. Your passport should be valid for six months beyond the intended length of your stay in the U.S. If your passport expires while you are residing in Los Alamos, you will need to contact your nearest embassy or consulate. You might be required to appear in person to renew your passport, which would mean a trip out of the state.



### VISAS

When your postdoctoral appointment is offered, you will also receive a form to be filled out regarding your visa history. This form should be completed and sent in with your signed offer letter. This information assists staff in the Internal Security (ISEC) Office to better determine the most appropriate visa status to sponsor in conjunction with your postdoctoral offer and your current visa status and to complete the necessary State Department and/or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services forms. Upon your acceptance of the postdoctoral appointment, the Immigration Services office staff will contact you and start processing your visa paperwork. While in the U.S., you must monitor your immigration status carefully. It is in your very best interest to remain totally and continually cognizant of your status and to monitor progress being made on any changes to or extensions of that status. Please allow sufficient time to get and renew your visa, and inquire about what is needed to maintain your visa. For more details or for questions, please see <http://www.lanl.gov/worklife/international/> or (internally) [http://int.lanl.gov/security/isec/ISO/iso\\_index](http://int.lanl.gov/security/isec/ISO/iso_index) . For information on applying for a U.S. visa see <http://travel.state.gov/> .

### TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS



When you return your signed offer letter, you will need to make travel arrangements through your group office who will help you determine when to arrive and make the reservations for you. Please keep in mind that you might need some extra time to get your visa processed.

### CREDIT CARDS

In addition to establishing an account at a local bank or credit union, it is wise to obtain a credit card. Credit cards are used for charging various expenses such as shopping and purchasing goods on the Internet, by phone, and by catalog. Most hotels require a credit card to make a reservation. Visa and MasterCard credit cards are widely accepted.

### LANGUAGE CLASSES

English is the official language in New Mexico and at LANL, even though many other languages are spoken locally. You and your family will need a good working knowledge of English to function comfortably at work and in the community. People with no knowledge of English will feel isolated. If necessary, take classes before you leave home. English classes are also offered at the local colleges and

universities. The University of New Mexico-Los Alamos (UNM-LA) offers free English classes and tutors. <http://www.la.unm.edu/abe/>

## **AMERICAN CULTURE**

To help prepare you to integrate into U.S. culture, see this page - <http://www.edupass.org/culture/>. There are good tips and helpful insights as to behavior and cultural expectations while in the U.S.

## **What to Bring:**

### **IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS**

If you plan to buy a car, you must have proof of automobile insurance. Insurance rates are determined by your age, driving record, and type of vehicle. Bring a statement of your driving record, translated into English, if possible. Bring your current driver's license as well. You can use this for up to 30 days upon your arrival in New Mexico before getting a NM Driver's license, and it could save you from having to take a driving test. For other questions, please see <http://www.state.nm.us/tax/mvd/>. If you have children, remember to bring their vaccination and medical records, as well as birth certificates, and school records. These documents are necessary to register your child in school.

### **MEDICINES AND PRESCRIPTIONS**

Please bring any medications and prescriptions that you need with you. Once you are here, you can go to the doctor's office to renew your prescriptions. Please see the U.S. Customs link below to get information about bringing medications into the U.S.



### **CLOTHING**

Los Alamos has four distinct seasons. You will need an assortment of clothing including everything from cool summer clothes to heavy winter jackets. You can buy any clothing you wish once here, but please plan accordingly for your arrival.

### **HOUSEHOLD ITEMS**



Both furnished and unfurnished apartments are available in Los Alamos. If furnished, they typically include a bed (you should ask what size), a dresser, a lamp, a couch, chairs, and a table (depending on the size of the apartment), and some general cookware. If you plan to buy a house, no furnishings are included. You will need to bring or buy your own linens and entertainment items, among other things. For a list of housing available in Los Alamos, see <http://www.losalamos.com/housing/>.

### **U.S. CUSTOMS REGULATIONS**

Please see [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures\\_1229.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1229.html) to obtain information on customs regulations when entering the U.S. You will find information about bringing medications, pets, and restricted goods into the U.S. There are also some very helpful traveler's tips for coming to the U.S., including mailing goods to the U.S. Additionally, the US Customs web site can be found at <http://cbp.gov>.

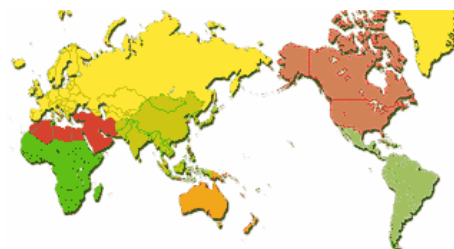
# LANL:

## CLEARANCES

Foreign Nationals do not receive clearances. This means that there are areas at LANL that you are not allowed to enter, even if your group is in a “restricted area” or “behind the fence.” If paperwork is properly submitted, you can be escorted to meetings and other events in restricted areas. You will also not be allowed access to any sensitive information.

## SENSITIVE VS. NON-SENSITIVE

The Department of Energy has issued a list of countries that are deemed “sensitive.” There is more security involved with people from sensitive countries and any communications with those countries from LANL property are closely watched. The sensitive country list includes; Afganistan, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Cuba, Georgia, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Moldova, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Rwanda, Sudan, Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.



## USEFUL LANL PHONE NUMBERS

Travel (Visitor Payment Section)	505-667-4138
Payroll (Visitor Payment Section)	505-667-8203
ISEC (DOE approval for foreign nationals)	505-665-1572
Consultant Information	505-667-8534
Badge Office	505-667-6901
Integrated Contractors	505-667-0171
Immigration Services Office	505-667-8650

## IMMIGRATION SERVICES ADDRESS

Los Alamos National Laboratory  
Visitors & Immigration Services  
P. O. Box 1663 / MS-P237  
Los Alamos, NM 87545  
USA

## Formalities:



### EMBASSY REGISTRATION

Notify your country’s embassy when you arrive in Los Alamos. Should a problem arise, your embassy can help you more quickly if you are already registered. To find your nearest embassy, go to the reference librarian at the Mesa Public Library, or search

[http://www.embassyworld.com/embassy/inside\\_usa.htm](http://www.embassyworld.com/embassy/inside_usa.htm).

## SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)

In order to be paid by a United States employer, you must possess a social security number. Social Security Cards are issued free of charge. More information may be found at <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10096.html>. To obtain a Social Security Number, you must go in person to the Social Security Administration Office (SSA). **Please Note: you should wait at least 10 days after arriving in the U.S. before visiting the SSA.** The SSA will need to electronically verify your legal status in the U.S. before processing your Social Security application. It normally takes 10 days for your immigration information to be electronically available. The Social Security Card application (SS-5) is available at the Social Security Administration Office or can be downloaded at the above web site. The Social Security Administration Office is located at:

### Social Security Administration Building

1911 Fifth Street

Santa Fe, NM 87505

(800) 772-1213 or (505) 473-3707

To apply for a Social Security Card, you must have proof of your identify and employment authorization. This includes the following original unexpired documents. The Social Security Administration Office will not accept copies or expired documents.

Completed Social Security Card Application (SS-5)

Passport

I-94 Card

Adjudicated DS-2019 Form (if applicable)

Social security numbers are primarily intended to identify participants in the federal government's social security program, which provides retirement and disability benefits to workers and their families. However, they are now widely used for other administrative purposes. ALL persons seeking employment of any kind must obtain a Social Security number before payment can be received.

Having a social security number makes it easier for you to open a bank account, obtain a credit card, get insurance, obtain a New Mexico driver's license, etc.

## DRIVER'S LICENSE

If you do not have an SSN and need to get a driver's license, you will have to go to the Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) office in Los Alamos or Santa Fe. You will need to present them with your passport with a U.S. Visa, or a passport and an original document issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), such as I-551, I-151, I-688, or I-797. You will also need to bring one official item with your New Mexico address on it, such as a rental agreement, a utility bill, an original government issued document, or a financial institution document. You may or may not be required to take a written and road test. The MVD offices are at 997 Central Avenue located by the upper parking lot of the Mari-Mac shopping center in Los Alamos, and at 2544 Camino Edward Ortiz, in Santa Fe. Information on the New Mexico MVD can be found at <http://www.dmv.org/nm-new-mexico/drivers-license.php>



## TRANSPORTATION

The LANL offers various transportation services to Lab employees, including the KSL taxi, the LA Bus Shuttle Service, the LA Bus services from town to the Lab, and the Northern New Mexico Park and Ride. Once at LANL, see <http://int.lanl.gov/orgs/ado/taxi.shtml> for additional details and schedules.



Since there is virtually no public transportation, we recommend that you get a car while living in Los Alamos. Don't worry about bringing your car with you. It is easier to buy, lease, or rent a car here than to import a car from your country. The U.S. has many strict regulations on imported cars, and importing is expensive.

## **HOW TO BUY A CAR**

In the process of buying a car, you will need a valid driver's license. Buying a new car from a dealer is relatively simple, but there are no dealers in Los Alamos. In Los Alamos, a good place to look for a used car is the Lemon Lot, a parking lot on the west side of Diamond Drive between Trinity Drive and Canyon Road.

In New Mexico, used cars are sold by giving the car's title (a paper) to the buyer and the car's current license plate to the seller. You and the seller must each fill in and sign a form printed on the back of the title. The seller is everyone named on the title; if the title names two persons, both must sign. If the seller or you make a mistake on the title, then you both must fill out another form, a Bill of Sale, available from the New Mexico Motor Vehicle Division (MVD). The seller then takes the license plate off the car. You may not drive a car without a plate on a public road, so you should ask the seller to (1) leave the plate on the car for a few hours or (2) sell you the car in the parking lot of the insurance agent that you have chosen. This is because, before you can register the car and get its new plate, you must buy insurance on the car; to sell you insurance, the agent must see the car. Useful websites:

<http://www.lanl.gov/worklife/international/living.shtml>,

[http://www.state.nm.us/tax/mvd/mvd\\_home.htm](http://www.state.nm.us/tax/mvd/mvd_home.htm), and <http://www.consumer.gov/transportation.htm>

## **TAXES**

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) began assigning Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) to non-citizens who need to report income for tax purposes but who are not eligible for SSNs.

To apply for an ITIN, you need to contact the IRS and ask for Form W-7 (Application for IRS Individual Taxpayer Identification Number). You can contact IRS by calling the toll-free number, 1-800-829-1040; or checking <http://www.irs.gov>. Yvonne Deshayes at LANL can give you information about tax treaties between the U.S. and other countries. She can be reached at [ynd@lanl.gov](mailto:ynd@lanl.gov), or (505) 665-7287.

## **POST OFFICE AND MAIL SERVICE**

The U.S. Postal Service delivers mail to homes and businesses on Monday through Saturday. Mail is not delivered on Sunday or legal holidays. Special delivery and express mail is delivered seven days a week. When mailing a letter in the U.S. make certain to use the zip code as this will speed delivery.

The current postal rates can be found at <http://www.usps.com/common/category/postage.htm>. The current rate to send a one-ounce first class letter within the U.S. is 37¢. The current rate to send a .5-ounce letter from the U.S. to an international location is 60¢ to 80¢, depending on destination.

The Post Office, is located on Central Avenue across from Starbucks. Hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 am-5:00 pm, and Saturday 8:00 am-12:30 pm. Phone: 505-662-2153

## Family Issues:

### SPOUSE



A spouse (wife or husband) that is not working outside the home and dependent children of foreign nationals in Los Alamos is often faced with an experience quite different from the postdoc. The postdoc who is working is usually quite busy and away from the home all day. This can be a lonely, isolating experience for the accompanying spouse and can be a difficult situation for everyone. The situation however can be improved if the spouse is able to participate in activities on his or her own. There are a number of possible activities in Los Alamos, even if your spouse is not able to work. UNM-LA offers free English lessons and tutoring.

Volunteering or joining a club is a wonderful way to get involved in the town's activities. There are also many organizations to get involved in that you can find at <http://www.losalamos.com/organizations/>.

You can learn about all the various clubs, activities, and churches at the Visitor's Center on the corner of Central Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street. If you have school-aged children, you may ask about volunteering in your child's classroom or in the school library.

J-2 visa holders (the spouses and dependent children of J-1's) may apply to the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) for permission to work in the U.S. Title 8, Code of Federal Regulations, part 214.2(j)(1)(v) states that, "income from the spouse's or dependent's employment may be used to support the family's customary recreational and cultural activities and related travel, among other things."

### CHILD SAFETY

There are many state and federal laws pertaining to the safety of children about which you need to be aware. For example in the state of New Mexico it is against the law to leave small children alone in a home, apartment or in a motor vehicle.

New Mexico State law also requires that any person who transports a child younger than age 4 in a motor vehicle must provide and require that the child use an approved car seat. Car seats may be purchased at local department or toy stores. When purchasing a car seat, look for the label that states "This car seat meets Federal Standards 213-80" or "meets Federal Standards, was manufactured after January 1, 1981." For a free pamphlet or more information on car seats, call 1-800-575-SEAT (7328). The police will fine you if your child is not in a car seat. When installing the car seat be sure to carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions. An improperly installed car seat is as dangerous as no car seat at all.



Be careful to keep all medicines and cleaning products out of the reach of children. If you have them in cupboards that the children can reach, be sure to install childproof locks on those doors. If you suspect your child has ingested medicine or cleaning products call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-343-2722 immediately.

Do not allow children to play with plastic bags. Children have suffocated and died as a result of putting plastic bags over their heads when playing.

Teach your children about safety in public places. Explain to them they should stay away from people they don't know and never accept gifts, candy, or rides from strangers. Although Los Alamos is a very



safe place, this is always a good rule.

New Mexico state law forbids child abuse, defined as beating or excessive punishment inflicted by parents or other family members. Teachers and child-care providers are required by law to report any suspected abuse to the local authorities who may conduct an investigation of your home.

## **Schooling:**

### **THE AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM**



The American school system consists of several levels of education. Pre-schools offer classes for children from two to five years of age. Elementary schools teach beginning subjects to children ages five to eleven or twelve. Secondary schools teach more advanced subjects to children from thirteen to seventeen or eighteen. At the elementary and secondary school levels, each year of schooling is termed a grade. Elementary school consists of seven years of education, kindergarten through sixth grade. Secondary schools include grades seven and eight at the Middle School, and grades nine through twelve at the High School. Colleges and universities and vocational schools provide education for those who have completed secondary school. Within the university system the first degree awarded is a bachelors' degree. Colleges and universities normally consist of four years as an undergraduate, labeled freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior years. For those students who continue on after the bachelors' degree, they are called graduate students. In graduate school, they can obtain a masters' degree within one to three years, or a PhD within four or more years.

### **NEW MEXICO STATE LAW**

New Mexico state law requires that all children attend school from age six to sixteen. If you would like to apply to home school your children, please see the web site below for requirements and procedures.  
<http://members.tripod.com/~HomeschoolingPACT/index-3.html>

### **EDUCATION IN LOS ALAMOS**

Los Alamos Public Schools provide free education for children from age five to eighteen. Pre-schooling is available within the public school system for children with mental or physical disabilities or that are developmentally delayed. Other pre-school aged children may enroll in private schools. Some private schools also offer classes from kindergarten to twelfth grade. UNM-LA offers academic courses and community or adult education classes, including English as a second language. To enroll your children in the public school system, please call 663-2222. Unlike public schools, private schools charge tuition and fees. For a list of all the public and private schools in Los Alamos and Santa Fe see, <http://www.sde.state.nm.us/districts/nw/losalamos.html> and <http://www.sde.state.nm.us/districts/ne/santafe.html>.



All children, whether they intend to work after graduation from high school or continue their education at a college or university, receive the same basic instruction. They do not take examinations at age eleven or twelve to determine the educational path they will follow.

On days when there is new snow on the ground or roads, there might be a delay in the school day to ensure safety. Please watch the local television stations for delay information or call 663-2223.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

For students with physical, mental or learning disabilities, public schools have a special education program. Within special education there are also classes for students for whom English is a second language. These students will receive more individualized attention and an individual curriculum. To get your child tested for special education call the Los Alamos Public Schools at 663-2222.

## **Culture Shock:**

Moving to a country with unfamiliar customs and a different language is both exciting and stressful. It is rare that a foreign national person does not encounter some kind of cultural adjustment.

Culture shock is a complex syndrome. The symptoms include depression, anger, irritation, and annoyance with the host country. It is caused partly by the loss of the subtle social clues that help people respond appropriately, integrate their experiences, and relate to others. When cultural expectations are not met, this often leads to stress and confusion.

To deal with culture shock, understand what it is and why you feel the way you do. Take positive steps to understand the host country culture. Learning English and studying the community, its history and customs will make the American way of life more comprehensible. Participate in social groups, take classes, and volunteer your time at schools, churches, or other community organizations. For a list of current organizations please go to the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce on Central Avenue and 15th Street in the same parking lot as Aspen Medical Care.

## **REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK**

After spending a number of years in the U.S., you might experience reverse culture shock when returning to your home country. Customs that you never questioned will cause you to hesitate. It can be dealt with in the same way as culture shock. Try to figure out what is bothering you and why. Sometimes just acknowledging it may help.

## **FACTORS IMPORTANT TO SUCCESSFUL INTERCULTURAL ADJUSTMENTS**

(Taken from [http://www.worldwide.edu/travel\\_planner/culture\\_adjusting.jsp](http://www.worldwide.edu/travel_planner/culture_adjusting.jsp))

**Open Mindedness...** The ability to keep one's opinions flexible and receptive to new stimuli seems to be important to intercultural adjustment.

**Sense of Humor...** A sense of humor is important because in another culture there are many things which lead one to weep, get angry, be annoyed, embarrassed, or discouraged. The ability to laugh off things will help guard against despair.

**Ability to Cope with Failure...** The ability to tolerate failure is critical because everyone fails at something overseas. Persons who go overseas are often those who have been the most successful in their home environments and have rarely experienced failure, thus, may have never developed ways of coping with failure.

**Communicativeness...** The ability and willingness to communicate one's feelings and thoughts to others, verbally or non-verbally, has been suggested as an important skill for successful intercultural communicators.

**Flexibility and Adaptability...** The ability to respond to or tolerate the ambiguity of new situations is very important to intercultural success. Keeping options open and judgmental behavior to a minimum describes an adaptable or flexible person.

**Curiosity...** Curiosity is the demonstrated desire to know about other people, places, ideas, etc. This skill or personality trait is important for intercultural travelers because they need to learn many things in order to adapt to their new environment.

**Positive and Realistic Expectations...** It has been shown frequently that there are strong correlations between positive expectations for an intercultural experience and successful adjustment overseas.

**Tolerance for Differences and Ambiguities...** A sympathetic understanding for beliefs or practices differing from one's own is important to successful intercultural adjustment.

**Positive Regard for Others...** The ability to express warmth, empathy, respect, and positive regard for other persons has been suggested as an important component of effective intercultural relations.

**A Strong Sense of Self...** A clear, secure feeling about oneself results in individuals who are neither weak nor overbearing in their relations with others. Persons with a strong sense of themselves stand up for what they believe but do not cling to those beliefs regardless of new information, perspectives, or understandings which they may encounter.

## **Your Legal Rights in the U.S.:**

by Hilary T. Fraser True, Walsh & Miller Attorney at Law

All persons in the U.S., including foreign nationals, have certain basic rights that must be respected by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). These rights stem from both the U.S. Constitution and U.S. laws. As a foreign national, you have the following rights:

**Your Right to Refuse Entry into Your Home:** You have a right to deny a USCIS agent entry into your home without a valid warrant. This warrant must be signed by a judge. You can refuse to open the door, or can close the door after discovering that the agent does not have a valid warrant. You also have a right to refuse to speak with USCIS agents or to answer any questions, or refuse to show the agent any documents, unless the agents have a warrant that lists all the documents that should be shown. If USCIS agents enter your home by force, or without a search warrant, you should contact an attorney immediately.

**Your Right to Remain Silent:** All foreign nationals are required to carry proof of their status upon them at all times. If you are a permanent resident, this may be shown by your alien registration receipt card (commonly known as a "green card"), or your passport may also indicate your legal status. If you are a non-immigrant alien, you have an arrival-departure card (I-94 card), a notation in your passport, and/or other proof of your status from the USCIS.

If you are stopped or detained on the street, and either do not have your documents on you, or are an undocumented alien, you have the right to remain silent about your immigration status. There is no need to show any document.

**Your Rights if You are Arrested:** Generally, state and local police officers do not have the power to arrest you for violating immigration laws. The enforcement of immigration laws is generally left to the USCIS. However, some state laws grant local police the authority to arrest persons who violate federal criminal laws, including criminal immigration statutes. In addition, a 1986 federal statute includes a

requirement that state law enforcement officials notify the USCIS when they arrest any individual suspected of being an undocumented alien on drug charges.

A USCIS officer is allowed to arrest you without a warrant if he believes that you are in the U.S. illegally and has reason to believe that you are likely to escape before a warrant can be obtained for your arrest. If the USCIS arrests you without a warrant, they must give you a form informing you of your rights. The form must note that you are allowed to speak with an attorney or other representative. The USCIS must give you a list of attorneys who will provide you with free legal services in the event that you cannot afford to pay for the services of a private attorney. If you ask to speak to an attorney, the USCIS must give you access to a telephone and at least two hours to try to call an attorney. During that time, the USCIS may not interrogate you, other than to obtain basic biographical information.

**Your Right to Refuse to Sign Any Document:** You have the right to refuse to sign your name on any immigration document or to request to speak to an attorney before signing such documents. By signing a document given to you by a USCIS agent, you may be giving up certain rights, or agreeing to return to your country.

**Your Rights at the Workplace:** For the USCIS to enter a workplace, the immigration agent must have a valid search or arrest warrant, or have the employer's permission to enter. If USCIS agents enter by force and arrest you, you should remain silent and demand the right to speak to an attorney. Remember: any information that is given to USCIS agents before speaking to an attorney may endanger your case.

**Other Rights at the Workplace:** All workers, regardless of their legal status, must receive at least the minimum wage for full-time work. If you work more than 40 hours a week in certain jobs, the employer should pay you one and one-half times the regular hourly rate. All workers are entitled by law to work in a place free from hazards likely to cause serious harm or death. Employers must provide safety equipment and remove hazardous materials from the workplace.

**Your Right to Send Your Children to Public Schools:** All children deserve an education. A U.S. court case in Texas upheld the obligation of public schools to admit all children, regardless of their immigration status. Public schools should not ask for your or your children's immigration status, and generally do not ask.

For more details about your rights, you may want to read "The Rights of Aliens and Refugees," written by the American Civil Liberties Union and published by Southern Illinois University Press, P.O. Box 3697, Carbondale, IL 62902-3697 (second edition 1990; \$7.95).